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Subject: How to Improve Youth Development and Retention for Long-Term Employment and Education Placements.

1. Purpose: To improve the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Performance Outcomes by increasing the diploma/General Educational Development (GED) equivalency and the retention measures that are assessed when a youth exits the program.
2. Substance: WIA defines Retention as sustained employment and connection to the workforce and/or continued participation in a long-term education or job training program until completion. The diploma/GED equivalency and the retention measure are outcome measures that are assessed when a youth exits the program. Youth *are automatically included* in the computation of these two measures upon exit. However, younger youth are excluded from the diploma/GED equivalency and the retention measures computation if they remain in secondary school.

For the older youth, ages 19 through 21, the retention rate is based on the same core indicator as adults, which is retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into the employment. The Older Youth Retention Measure counts employment in the first and third quarters after exit, and excludes those who enter post secondary education or advanced training. Retention strategies for this population should therefore emphasize employment for those who do not go on to higher education.

The Younger Youth Retention Rate for youth 14 through 18 is based on placement and retention in post secondary education, advanced training, qualified apprenticeships, military service, or employment in the third quarter after exit. The measure excludes those who return to secondary school at exit. The Department of Labor affirmed that these five outcomes are the expected result for younger youth who do not return to

secondary school at exit. Service strategies for this population should be delivered in a manner that anticipates retaining clients into one of these five outcomes at this crucial third quarter after exit interval.

The definition of these outcomes may factor in to how they are delivered, with respect to a local area's resources, access to partner services, and a client's post-exit strategy needs. Note the following definitions from Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 7-99:

- 1) *Post Secondary Education* - a program at an accredited degree-granting institution that leads to an academic degree (e.g., A, AS, BA, BS). Does not include programs offered by degree-granting institutions that do not lead to an academic degree.
- 2) *Advanced Training* - an occupational skills employment/training program, not funded under Title I of the WIA, which does not duplicate training received under Title I. Includes only training outside of the One-Stop, WIA and partner system (i.e., training following exit).
- 3) *Qualified Apprenticeship* - a program approved and recorded by the Employment and Training Administration/Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training or by a recognized State Apprenticeship Agency (State Apprenticeship Council). Approval is by certified registration or other appropriate written credential.
- 4) *Military Service* - reporting for active duty.

Coordinate with partners to determine which services can be delivered to WIA-registered clients. Moreover, ensure each client is closely case tracked in Toolbox during the partner's service, so that the information properly counts toward performance.

In the case of Younger Youth, the employment outcome might be the easiest outcome to verify, since this employment is defined as having *any* earnings above zero. Since it is verified by the state using unemployment insurance earnings data, as well as by local follow-up via supplemental data, very often the measure will catch a youth's wage earnings data from some place of employment even after the case manager has lost track of him or her.

From a service strategy perspective, however, it may be difficult to retain employment for this age group from the time of exit to the third quarter in which it is measured. Local areas may consider developing strategies that emphasize sustaining employment with an agency, or benefiting from a series of employers (i.e., attachment to the workforce), depending on the needs of the individual and the local economic situation.

The other retention measures are heavily dependent upon follow-up and data entry. Post secondary education, advanced training, military service, and qualified apprenticeships are assessed by the local provider and should be considered by local operators when conducting follow-up on younger youth. In addition, by assisting youth with the completion of post secondary education, advanced training, and qualified apprenticeships, it will prepare the youth to obtain more secure employment opportunities at higher wages while enhancing their career development.

The key to local providers of youth services achieving improved retention outcomes is continued follow-up services. Follow-up services and activities after placement in a job or educational program are an essential and integral part of the goal directed, youth development continuum of program services from program entry to program exit.

In providing follow-up services to facilitate retention, it is important to maintain a network of services that support the whole person, and allows easy access for the youth to those services. Effective follow-up services in addition to improving retention, will keep youth in training until completion and meet employer's needs for reduced turnover and a skilled, reliable workforce, and thus generate increased public support for youth programs and services.

3. Action: Workforce Investment Areas should share this issuance with local youth service providers and forward to the local Youth Council. Request technical assistance from the Division of Workforce Development if needed to ensure that relevant issues presented in this document are implemented. For additional guidance on improving youth retention, please refer to the Division of Workforce Development's **Workforce Investment Act Performance Handbook** at <http://www.ecodev.state.mo.us/mttc/resources.htm>.
4. Contact: Any questions relating to this issuance should be directed to Robert Ruble, Youth Services Section, at (573) 526-8258.

5. Reference: TEGL No. 12-01; TEGL 7-99; and the Workforce Investment Act Performance Handbook.

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